

THE TOKEN¹

By JOSEPH HERGESHEIMER

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WHAT Epes Calef principally thought, walking sharply away from his discharged responsibility at the Custom House, through the thin icy light of late afternoon, was that he was glad that was finally done with. It was, he assured himself again, with articulating lips. The next time he went to sea, to the East, to Patagonia and Canton and the Falklands, or lay in the Macao Roads with the Brahminy kites perched high on the rigging, he would be first mate, perhaps even master, of the *Triton*, and no longer a mere supercargo. No words could adequately express how much he hated that position of barterer. Very privately—in view of his father's special characteristic—he hadn't considered it at all a necessary part of his training for the commanding of Calef ships; others of his acquaintance, making like him toward such a superlative destiny, had worked their way progressively aft with no pause over kegs of Spanish dollars and the ridiculous merchants of Co-Hongs and countinghouses. They had always, from the first, been seamen, while he— But he need bother no longer, his seemingly endless wearisome apprenticeship, the tiresome dickering, was over; and in the coming spring, before the lilacs had bloomed in Salem, he would personally, individually, order the last fast holding the *Triton* to earth cast off.

He swore a little, in a manner at once of the sea and of vainglorious youth. Epes Calef was not yet twenty, and his breath congealed in a sparkling mist. He was, he reminded himself with a lifting pleasure, home; the *Triton* had docked at noon, but he had been so busy with the infernal accounts and manifest, the wharfinger and harbor

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master, that he had hardly dwelt upon his safe and happy return. Neither, he suddenly realized, had he yet seen any member of his family; even Snelling Pingre, their head clerk, had been able only to wave briefly from a distance. His, Epes', father was more often than not at Derby Wharf on the return of one of his ships; either Ira Calef, or Bartlett, the elder son. Now Bartlett, his thoughts ran on, had always been splendidly suited to his appointed activity—an application to the purely financial side of the Calefs' wide trading voyages.

With Bartlett in Salem gradually taking the place of their father, and Epes a master on the sea, the fortunes and prestige of the family would increase in the next generation and the next. But this reflection, or rather its implication, suddenly changed the substance of his thoughts. They settled on Annice Balavan—with an unaccountable, an unreasonable sensation of amazement. Epes recognized that he was about to marry her. He had made this a possibility, no, inevitable, just before he had left on this last voyage. He was in for it, he told himself, in a phrase not wholly gracious, since he had given her the Calef token.

It was remarkable about that—it was an obang, really; a thin gold coin of the East, almost as broad as his palm and stamped with angular signs—because there could be no doubt that when a Calef gave it to a woman, no matter who she was or what the circumstances, he married her. It had come to Salem in the reticule of a ridiculous Dutch girl to whom the obang had been given in the hotel of the Dutch East India Company at Batavia by the first adventurous Calef. And after that its tradition, its power, had fast animated it. Epes' attitude toward this, and to Annice Balavan, was consequently fatalistic. Now, after nearly two years on the islands and continents and wide waters of the world, he didn't see how he had come to give the token to Annice. He had, all at once, no great desire for marriage, except to the *Triton*; but with a youthfully philosophical sigh he accepted the impending consequences of his gift as inevitable to life.

There was some consolation in the reflection that Annice

was, it was practically admitted, the prettiest girl in Salem, and there was a permissible question if there were any better looking in Boston. Her considerable part of the Balavan money, too, would be a material assistance to the not inconsiderable Calef funds and ambitions. It was, after all, Epes decided, a very sensible and advantageous arrangement; the more so because he knew beforehand that Annice would not insist on going to sea with him; everyone, in fact, connected with a ship hated a woman, the master's wife, on board. She didn't like the sea, and made no secret of her feeling; the air from it, drawing in through Salem Harbor, took the crispness out of her muslins and made her hair, she declared, look like strings. But that was nonsense; her ashen-gold hair, even in its net, had the softest and most delicate beauty imaginable. Very different it was from Sumatra's; but then, everything about Sumatra, the younger sister, was unlike Annice; particularly the former's exaggerated—Epes called it that—passion for ships and the sea. She carried this to a most unbecoming extent; positively her questions were a nuisance.

He passed the Essex House on the right, and then the Marine Store. The light faded rapidly and it was growing noticeably colder, frigid and still; the sky was a clear pale yellow that flickered in the patches of metallic ice along the gutters, and footfalls, voices, carried surprisingly. Unaccustomed, for a comparatively long period, to winter, he was at once aware of its sting and yet found a gratification, without specially heavy clothes, in disregarding it. He had been hardened to both danger and exposure, and he accepted them with a sense of challenge and victory. How little Salem, the land, compared with the shifting sea, changed; here there was no making or taking in of sail; it didn't matter what happened in the way of weather, the houses, the stone-laid streets, even commonly the trees, were always placidly, monotonously the same. The life in them, as well, went always over the old charted and recharted courses, every morning resembled every other morning, each night all the others. Why, take this latter voyage, twenty-five days from Bombay to Liverpool——

He had reached Summer Street, and turned again, past Mechanics Hall; soon he would be on Chestnut, and then wholly home. Where, he wondered, after he was married to Annice, would he live? Maybe on Bath Street, overlooking Washington Square, or close to the Ammidons. Annice, he thought, would rather prefer that; there was at last a movement away from Chestnut Street toward the square. It made no difference to him; his home primarily—yes, his heart—would be on the quarter-deck of his ship. His wife might arrange all the details on shore. She would do it very well, too; Annice, in addition to her beauty, was capable; she had a direct, positive mind.

He would get the preliminaries of that business over with as soon as possible, and then, late in April, or in May— Where, he speculated already, would he set sail for? There were so many alternatives, so many diverse cargoes to load and progressively discharge. Abruptly he was swinging in between the hand-wrought iron fencing across the Calef dwelling. It was an imposing square house of brick with a square-looking classic portico, a tall elaborate Palladian window above, and four great chimneys at the corners of the white-railed captain's walk that crowned the flattened roof. Epes found the front door unsecured, and entered, calling in a voice that echoed in the bare, dignified hall.

Instantly, from the floor above, his mother replied, but in a voice strangely, almost unrecognizably emotional, and he heard her equally disturbed and hurried approach. The darkly paneled and carved stairway, bending above his head at the tall window over the portico, hid her until she had almost reached him; and then with an involuntary painful contraction of his heart he saw that she was in deep mourning, and that her face was heavy, sodden with tears. Before he could question her, her arms were about his shoulders and she was sobbing again.

"Epes, Epes, I was afraid you weren't coming back either."

"What is it?" he stammered. "Is father——"

She drew slightly away from him, gazing with streaming eyes into his questioning face. "Why, haven't you— But

that is incredible!" She was close to him again. "Bartlett is dead. It—it happened in New York, from a torn finger and blood poisoning. In two days, Epes; we hardly got there, saw him. Your father had to go to Boston, and is just back; but he'll see you almost at once, in the music room, he said."

How like his father that insistent formality was, Epes thought; nothing, it seemed, was to shake the dignity, the aloofness of Ira Calef. His manner positively carried with it a chill as palpable as that now in the streets. He was, of course, both to the world at large and to his family, the perfect shape of integrity; but that, with his rigidly correct deportment, appeared to be his only conception of what was owing, through him, to exterior circumstance and people. All people—Clia, his wife, his two sons—had been exterior to Ira Calef; it was always evident that he viewed, weighed every possible development of living solely in the light of his own unalterable convictions and wishes. They were, it was true, always carefully studied, logical; nor were his decisions quickly formed, in any heat, generous or bitter; it was the inflexible manner, the finality and detachment of their announcement which made them appear so unbearably arbitrary.

The music room, like the stair well, was entirely paneled, walls and ceiling in dark wood, and the mahogany in it, the waxed floor, even the windows with their multiplicity of small panes, held in replica the withdrawn, almost morose effect given by Ira Calef himself. He came presently, in a gait neither slow nor fast, into the music room, where, without his mother, Epes was waiting. The other's show of welcome was, for him, unusual; he held Epes' hand for more than the strictly necessary moment, and at once indicated a chair and the fact that Epes might sit. He was a big man, past sixty, handsomely proportioned, with a handsome face evenly pallid except for the discolorations hanging under eyes themselves almost without a perceptible shading. They were, of course, gray, yet they were so pale that but for their domineering focus they rather resembled clear water slightly crystallized with ice. He made an adequate but brief reference to Bartlett's

death, dwelling for a little on the collapse of the boy's mother; and then leaning back and deliberately, for the time, shifting the conversation, asked Epes Calef for a detailed account of what on his voyage as supercargo he had accomplished.

This Epes, to his considerable relief of mind, was able to explain satisfactorily. The master of the *Triton*, Whalen Dove, had come on board the ship at Gravesend, twenty miles down river from London, and after they had been wind-bound for two weeks at Ramsgate they had proceeded to Madeira for wine, put into Colombo after twenty days, and had gone on almost immediately to the Coromandel Coast, Pondicherry and Madras, where the cargo had been disposed of through Lyss, Saturi & Demonte. Yes, the ship had come home by way of Rotterdam. Lost Teneriffe above the clouds five degrees west. They had made seventeen knots with the main skysail set, when a British ship was under double-reefed topsails. But in a three-quarters gale, west southwest, they carried away a mizzen topsail and the foresail burst.

Ira Calef listened to this in an admirable silence that at the same time conveyed the impression that he was exercising an unnecessary amount of patience in the waiting for details of more importance. Epes quickly recalled himself from his enthusiasm in the mere fact of seamanship. There were close to two hundred cases of indigo in the *Triton's* hold—186, to be precise; about a million pounds of Madras sugar; 460 pieces of redwood; 709 bags of ginger; 830 bags of pepper; 22 chests of tea—The duty, the elder decided, would be over twenty thousand dollars.

"You didn't like this," he said unexpectedly to his son.

Epes met his cold gaze fairly. "No, sir," he replied.

"Always the taste for mere ships."

To this there was no permissible answer.

"I am sorry for that," the other proceeded, "for, now that Bartlett is dead, it will be needful for you to give up the sea as a career; I shall require you to stay in Salem. There are plenty of good, even faithful masters of ships; but after me you are the only remaining Calef; and it won't do for you to be knocking around the windy reaches

of the globe." He stopped, entirely inattentive of Epes' strained lips, his half-lifted hand.

A choking emotion, partly made up of incredulity and in part a burning resentment, fast-rising rebellion, filled Epes Calef. This—this wasn't right, it wasn't fair, it wasn't possible. They couldn't take and, for all his past life, fix his every ambition and hope and standard on the sea, and then in a sentence or two destroy him, ruin everything he was and might be; for what his father had just said amounted to no less. It was inhuman. It couldn't be! Evidently Ira Calef expected him to speak, to acquiesce, for his regular eyebrows mounted ever so slightly. But the thing, the only safety, for Epes now was to remain silent.

"I am not even, completely, certain of Salem," the elder went on in his level voice, after what had almost become an unbearable pause. "I personally shall never live anywhere else; but it may be necessary for you to move into Boston—for a number of years anyhow. I am getting more and more absorbed in marine insurance; and the opportunities for the study of that are moving away from us here. I have spoken to Annice about all this, and since she is a sensible girl with no fancy for a husband eternally below the horizon she is delighted."

"I see," Epes said uncertainly.

Annice Balavan would be delighted with all that his father had just said, especially with the Boston part, the larger society there. She was a natural part of this new, incredibly horrible plan; instantly he identified her with it, saw her moving radiant and content over its monotonous bricks and floors and earth. Something within him, automatic, brought him to his feet. The other glanced up, once.

"You are, of course, upset by the suddenness of the news of your brother's death," he conceded. "If you like you may go to your room with no further discussion at present. There isn't a great deal left to be said—more movements than words. The most advantageous arrangements will be made for Annice and you; her mother has already promised to furnish a Boston house for her in the new style. I

am pleased with the manner in which you appear to have accomplished your duties on the *Triton*."

In his room a fire of coals was burning in the grate, with a faintly audible splitting and small rushes of gaseous flame. It cast a perceptible ruddiness on the immediate oak flooring, while the rest of the room was rapidly dimming; the windows, beyond which the familiar limbs of the elms on the street were sharp and black, showed only rectangles of cold gray; the yellow light had faded from the sky. Epes stood irresolutely, with his gaze lowered, his brow drawn with lines. He could just see his blue sea chest, sent up from the ship earlier in the afternoon; and the brass disks of a nocturnal, his chiefest treasure, hung, he knew, above the chest on the wall. That old instrument of navigation, for finding at night, through the North Star, the hour, seemed to challenge and mock his wretchedness and impotence. That latter word most perfectly held the essence of his tragic situation.

He could do nothing!

Epes slipped into a chair and attempted to combat this. A daring resolution hovered about him, reckless, and yet, he told himself fiercely, entirely justified; he might run away to sea; the sea, the service, he loved. He could ship any day, from any port, as third, probably second mate, and after a single voyage become first officer. That was the reasonable thing to do. He understood that an appeal to his father was worse than useless; the opening of any protest, a difference of opinion, determination, would close Ira Calef to both sympathy and attention. He would be simply, remotely unbending—the eyebrows would climb, his mouth harden, a cutting phrase end the conversation. His father, Epes had realized, was different from the other pleasant fathers he knew; he had always been, well—inhuman. That term in such a connection was new, presumptuous, but Epes in his present mood defiantly allowed it. However, not until now had he acutely suffered from the elder Calef's disposition. Outside he had heard the words "an India liver" applied to his father; yet even Salem was cautious, deferential in its attitude there; Epes could never remember an occasion when his father had

been balked in a decision, or even seriously contradicted.

He felt actually as though he hated that frozen parental figure; and he almost blamed Bartlett for dying. That recalled the fact that his brother was dead, that his emotion was neither appropriate nor decent; but the threatened, overpowering wrong to him persisted in dominating every other response. Yes, Epes repeated, he would run away; that—very successfully—had been done before. He'd leave everything, go with only the clothes in which he stood, leaving, out of the sum due him from the *Triton*, payment for them. That act, he recognized, must take him forever from his family, from, as long as Ira Calef lived, his home, Salem. The other would never relent. He thought for a moment of his mother's helpless position; never had he heard her raise her voice, oppose in any particular her husband. He was not, it was true, unkind or discourteous to her, he merely ignored the possibility of her having a single independent desire, a fraction of personality or will. And during Epes' life she had shown no indication that he was wrong. What, Epes now wondered, was the actuality beneath her calm demeanor; maybe she hated, detested Ira Calef. This amazing speculation redirected his thoughts to Annice Balavan.

Or rather, it drew his mind back to the token, the gage of the Calef men. Its reputed, its proved force exerted a species of numbing magic on him; his superstitious regard for it held his imagination as though in chains. Epes had given the obang to Annice, and therefore he was going to marry her; there was no escape from the girl who possessed it. This instinct was so strong that it struck at all his vague planning—Annice, if he knew her, would never consent to marry a runaway sailor, third mate or first or master. No matter what he might project, an unforeseen circumstance, accident, would betray him and marry him to Annice Balavan.

He tried to throw this conviction off, to laugh it away for nonsense; he derided himself unsparingly; rising, he told himself that he would tramp down through the house and out at once; but instead he sank back into his chair. Yet it might be that he could get away, come back suc-

cessful, rich, in a very few years—one good voyage would secure that—and find Annice waiting for him. This seemed to him an inspiration, and a hard, active spirit welled up within him. After no more than one voyage to China. But again a disability, as gray as the dusk without, flooded him; he couldn't, when the moment came, walk away in that manner from responsibility. No matter what his father was like, he was incontrovertibly his father; already Epes Calef saw his world as the deck of a ship, and the high order, the discipline of that plane was the base of his being. There was, of course, injustice on the sea; tyrannical captains; but the injustice and tyranny could not be met with mutiny. For example, if as a subordinate he were directed to take his ship onto rocks that he could clearly see, what was there for him to do but that? How could he question or penetrate the superior, the totally responsible position?

There had been cases when a master, obviously insane or incapacitated, had been restrained, held in his cabin against the next port inquiry, by his principal officers; but even at the height of his desire Epes couldn't call his father insane. Still seeing his fate as a part of the obsessing sea he told himself that figuratively he had been set ashore on a sterile and deserted beach while his ship, having swung about with her sails filling gloriously, left him for the rush of free water. Accustomed to the open, to hour after hour, day after day, month on month, on deck, he felt all at once that he couldn't breathe in his closed room the confined heat of the coals. Epes, for a little, suffered acutely, in a constriction of nerves. His whole life was to be like this!

A knock sounded at the door, and a servant entered with fresh candles, which he proceeded to fix on the dressing stand, the overmantel, and light. The illumination, at first uncertain, wan, gained in steady brightness. It was time to dress for dinner. There had been no opportunity for him to procure mourning, but he put on his darkest, most formal clothes, and tied a severe black neckcloth.

The candelabra on the dining table showed his mother's place to be empty—she was not yet able to manage the

casual—and the chair that had been Bartlett's was pushed against the wall. Ira Calef, seen to extreme advantage at the ceremony of dinner, hardly spoke; he was intent upon his codfish, with a green sauce; and he tasted critically the brown sherry before him in a large goblet of fragile glass flecked with gold. With this, it developed, he was dissatisfied; the wine had, he said curtly, withered; sherry, upon opening, could not withstand delay. He sent out the entire decanter with the order to replace it with another bottling—the Tio Pepe of the *Saragon*. He listed his cellar by the names of the vessels in which the various importations had been made. During this process he maintained an inflexible silence colored with his familiar suggestion of a restraint that no immoderate cause could break. To Epes the sherry, when it arrived, had no more warmth or flavor than was probable in the celebrated muddiness of the Hugli River.

Selecting a cheroot blindly from the box held at his elbow, and lighting it at the tendered spill, he retired mentally in the thin veil of smoke that rose across his face.

"You will, of course, stop in at the Balavans' this evening," his father said presently. Everything he uttered, Epes thought, took subconsciously the form of a direction. Still he must, he supposed, see Annice, if only for the announcement of his return.

The Balavans lived on the north edge of town, their terraced lawn descended to navigable water—to the anchorage, in fact, of the now vanished Balavan merchant fleet, and a deserted warehouse. And, shown through the hall to a drawing-room against the dark, bare garden, Epes found not Annice, as he had expected, but Sumatra. She was glad to see him. She was an indifferent girl, and this was specially noticeable; but he returned, inwardly and visibly, little if any of her pleasure.

"Tell me every shift of the wheel," she demanded, facing him from the long stool of the spinet. "Be a human log."

"I thought Annice was here," he replied.

"She will be soon enough. Did the *Triton* do anything really stirring, outsail seven ships or part both chains in

Table Bay? I hope you came into Derby Wharf with the sheer poles coach-whipped and cross-pointed Turks'-heads with double-rose props."

"I assure you, Sumatra," he told her stiffly, "that I haven't any idea of what you are talking about. And, what is more, I don't think you have." With this he half turned from her.

He could still see her, though, a thickly set girl—was she sixteen yet?—with a rosy, impertinent face and hair loosely confined in a ribbon. Her name had been given her from the fact that a Balavan, a master of ships, had in the eighteenth century discovered pepper growing wild on the coast of Sumatra. But there was now, Epes told himself, a far better reason—heaven knew she was peppery. Rather a detestable child.

Far from being disconcerted by the brevity of his retort she replied that she had heard it didn't matter what he understood or didn't understand about the sea—"Now that you are to be a clerk."

After the stress, the difficulty of his homecoming, and from Sumatra, this was positively too much; and all the bitterness banked up by his father's unassailable situation fell upon her.

"All your life," he asserted, "you have been a joke, with your language like a crazy ship chandler. You have never been in the least feminine or attractive, and you never can be, not by the width of a finger nail. Part of it—being built like a sampan—you can't help; but that won't help you, will it? But you might, at least, get a vocabulary that ought to suit you better. All I say is, you'll notice, that it ought to. What suits you I shouldn't try to guess. That's mostly what I think about you; but on this other subject, where my private affairs, perhaps sorrows, are concerned, shut up."

This ill-tempered, rasped conclusion came so abruptly that it surprised even him. He glanced at her a shade regretfully, and saw with a feeling of satisfaction that once, anyhow, he had impressed, silenced her. Her head was bent, her face obscured by her forward-swung hair; her slippers were very rigidly together.

"I suppose you are right," she admitted after a long breath. "Probably you won't believe it, but I have never thought much about myself or how I affected people. Yes, a lot of them—and you, too—must think I am a joke. So few care for anything as I do for the sea. It used to seem to me that perhaps you did; I was wrong though."

"Didn't I tell you to let me alone?" he cried, again furious. "How do you know what I care for? What do you mean by daring to judge me, you—you——"

"Aren't you leaving the sea for your father's counting-house?" Sumatra calmly demanded of him.

"If I am it's because my duty is there," he replied miserably.

"You are the hell of a sailor," she commented.

Ever since she could walk Sumatra had, on occasion, sworn; at times it had amused Epes Calef, but now it only added to his dislike, his condemnation of her. She should not, he told her severely, have been encouraged to continue it. Her answer was the expressed reflection that he might do better on shore; his delicacy was much too great for salt water.

"Do you honestly hate me?" she asked unaccountably. "I mean, when you are not in a rage."

"No, I don't hate you, in a rage or out of it," he said coldly. "Often you go beyond your years, and you presume a good deal; but after a while you'll make a good wife for the captain of a West India lugger or some fellow trading with Bermuda Hundred."

This was an adroit insult, and pleurably he watched her flush. She became so unhappy that he was magnanimously touched with remorse, and said with a kindly condescension that it was too bad she hadn't been born a boy.

At that he had it swiftly proven to him that attitudes, interests, vocabularies were misleading, for logical and wholly feminine tears actually streamed over her healthy cheeks. It grew worse, for she rose and came close to him, with clasped desperate hands.

"Don't listen to him!" she begged. "He's a horrid man of snow, even if he is your father; and if you let him he'll spoil your life. Tell him that you have made up your

mind to go to sea, and that nothing can change it. You won't be struck dead. He isn't God with a stick of lightning."

"You don't understand," he stammered, backing away from her, intolerably embarrassed. "I am not, as you seem to think, afraid of my father. I have been over and over it all in my head. No, it's something different. You couldn't understand," he repeated. "No girl could."

"You are wrong," she replied slowly. "I see all that you mean, and—yes—I suppose I admire you for it. You can't mutiny"—she echoed his own phrase—"others could, but not a Calef. Yet you make me furious, you are so helpless, so stupid. You will marry Annice and grow fat and near-sighted, that's what'll happen to you."

Annice, in the doorway, asked: "Well, why not?"

Disregarding Sumatra, Epes went forward to meet the girl who possessed the Calef token. He had, in spite of his assertions, forgotten how lovely she was, slender and palely gold; her gray-gold hair was like a cloud in sifted sunlight, her skin had an even, warm pallor that remotely suggested oranges, and her eyes were a cool autumnal brown.

"Epes," she continued, "how burned and well you look."

She took his vigorous hands in hers, held them lightly for a second, and then relinquished him.

"There is an ocean of things for us to talk about and arrange," she proceeded, from a divan; and her glance at Sumatra was a dismissal.

The younger girl made a profound curtsy to them both, surprisingly graceful for her solidity of waist, and disappeared. Epes realized that he ought to kiss Annice, but he felt awkward in the extreme. She held her face delicately to him; it was like a tea rose. He was, he supposed, fortunate; but no sensation of gladness accompanied that supposition. It was so sad about Bartlett, she went on; and how enormously his death had affected them. Wasn't it unexpectedly sweet of her mother to furnish their house—"in miraculous brocades and hangings, with a French boudoir"?

Walking slowly home, the stars, very high above him,

were like a powdering of dry, luminous snow on the polished night. The cold was so intense that his exposed face ached. What an odorous heat there would be over the mooring at the Prince's Ghat in Calcutta! He remembered the firm, light pressure of the northeast trades, the perpetual fleecy trades clouds about the horizon, the bonitos and albacore in the deeply blue, sunny water. Lovely sailing.

Was it true that all that, for him, was already a thing of the past? Epes couldn't believe it, and yet—what other conclusion was possible? Turning his thoughts to the past hour with Annice he tried, in her, to find a recompense for what he was losing, but without success. He was proud of her; in her way she was fine and beautiful. Perhaps what he understood love to be came later; it might be unreasonable to expect the whole measure of joy at once. Annice was cool enough; indeed they had acted as though they had been married for a year or more, as though they had been continuously together instead of having been so lately separated by the diameter of the world.

There was a light in the small room at the rear of the hall, used by his father as an office; and as he laid aside his wraps the elder appeared in the doorway, obviously desiring speech.

"I have seen Mr. Dove," Ira Calef told his son; "and he corroborates your report, with some added praise. I am very well pleased, Epes. Your conduct this evening, too, was admirable. I did not quite expect, at once, such a full comprehension of my intentions. The fact is," he proceeded in a general discursive manner, "that the country is changing very rapidly. A great many men are blind to this, and as a result they will have to suffer. It is not so with me. The days of the colony are at last definitely at an end; from now on not adventure but finance will be the ruling spirit. That is one of the reasons why I am withdrawing you from the sea. Let other paid men—good men, but essentially subordinate—undertake the gales and half gales; it is important for you, a Calef, to be at the center of affairs and safe."

Epes' expression was dull, unrevealing; everything that was being said contradicted and outraged his every fiber.

Safe! Good men, but subordinate! He longed to shout—for all sailors, before and aft the mast—a contradiction of his father's cold patronizing periods. He loathed the money sharks who on land, in houses, traded on the courage and endurance and fidelity of ships' masters and crews. If Ira Calef was right, and they had grown unimportant, if their greatness was doomed to vanish—why, then he wanted to go too.

All this filled his brain and throat, clamored for expression; but not a word, not a protesting sound came from him. Suddenly he was tired; Epes felt as though the leaden weight of his future already rested on him. The other made an approving reference to Annice Balavan; and perversely, for no discoverable reason, in place of the golden vision of Annice he saw Sumatra, square, like a sampan—and defiant.

When, for the time, Ira Calef had quite finished the expression of his balanced judgments Epes rose with the shadow of an instinctive bow.

"Very good, sir." The sea phrase was spoken in a voice without animation.

Above, close by his room, he was mildly surprised to find his mother. It was evident that she had been waiting for him, and followed, carefully closing the door behind them.

"How did you find Annice?" she asked.

But to his reply that Annice had seemed well enough she paid no attention. With a quick, nervous gesture she pressed her handkerchief against her eyes.

"And your father——"

Epes said nothing.

"Epes," she cried, in a sudden realization of all that, it was now clear, she wanted to say to him, "no matter how hard and unreasonable he may seem, you mustn't contradict him. It isn't as though he were going to do you harm. What he plans is right; he can see so much farther than we can. And you will be very happy, I am sure, with Annice. You'll forget the sea?" her voice rose in inquiry.

"Never," Epes answered.

Clia Calef shivered momentarily. "I was afraid of some-

thing like that," she admitted. "And that is why it is necessary for me to speak to you. You must do what your father wants."

This was, he thought, in view of his restraint, all unnecessary. He regarded his mother, seated with her head blurred against the candlelight, with a mature, unsympathetic attention. Women—the characteristic feminine world—were very far outside the scope of his interests and being. Even to his mother he could not explain, seek to justify himself; his inner being had grown obdurate, solitary; life, which had once, in the form of blue water, everywhere surrounded and touched him, had retreated, flowed away, leaving him on that sandy, meaningless beach. Why did she talk and talk?

"You have been wonderfully quiet," she still went emotionally on; "I could tell that from Ira's manner. But I wasn't sure. I'm not yet; and for that reason, to save hideous trouble, I made up my mind to tell you. There is a little strangeness about your father, and it comes out when he is contradicted. Except for that he is splendid. I don't just know what it is, but contradiction makes him wretched; he—he loses control of himself." She was speaking faster, with an obvious increasing difficulty. "I did it, once. We hadn't been married long, and it was in the garden. He had just come back from the counting-house, and he was carrying a light cane, a wanghee. And, Epes, he struck me with it. Oh, not very hard; not, really, too hard. I didn't say a word. I stood for a second, quite frozen, and then I turned to walk out of the garden, to leave him, forever. I intended to go, but it did hurt. I was confused, and instead of finding the gate I walked into the geraniums and fainted. So, you see, I stayed."

Epes Calef drew in an audible harsh breath.

"You mustn't judge him!" she exclaimed eagerly. "I am sure it spoiled a large part of his life. He carried me into the house, and neither of us have referred to it since. Yes, it hurt him beyond speech; for weeks he slept hardly at all. Epes, Epes, I can't have it happen to him again. He is your father and you must help. You love him, too, I am certain; and what he arranges is always, always best."

She was so tremulous, so self-effacing, that he felt he couldn't bear to hear another word. It was terrible, and as wrong as possible.

"He ought to be denied," Epes said in a strong voice. "Now that you have told me this I think it might be what he, what we all need; perhaps I shall have to."

"That is not for you to judge," Clia Calef told him with a resumption of dignity. "You would be very wicked indeed; and not only, perhaps, harm Ira permanently, but me as well. I have to live with him, and not you. Epes, you have the ignorance of youth; but if I can help it I won't have you upsetting our life."

He was, he saw, literally nothing before her love for the man who had struck her with his wanghee.

"It would spoil everything," she half whispered to herself. "I have tried hard, so long."

Epes rose sharply. "You must go to bed," he directed. "If you are not careful you will be sick." He was deathly sick. She clung to him.

"Promise me, promise you will do as he says."

"I have already decided that," he answered in his weary, dead voice.

Epes, with his hand under her arm, conducted her to her room. A wave of warmth flowed into the hall as the door opened and shut, like the soiled enervating breath of a hidden corruption.

It was a physical impossibility, in the temporarily empty days following immediately Epes' arrival home, for his spiritual darkness to stay at its intensest; at least his state of mourning made it unnecessary for him to go to the meaningless parties being then crowded into the heart of the winter season. It was uncomfortable for him at home, and he fell into the habit of lounging through the afternoons in the more informal of the Balavans' drawing-rooms. There, in his special position and license, he was permitted to smoke his cheroots and listen to the light easy run of Annice's voice, so much like the easy light tripping of her fingers over the keyboard of the spinet. He was engaged in exactly this manner an hour or so before Annice's departure for one of the principal cotillions of the year, at

Hamilton Hall; and Annice, who had dressed early so that she could be with him, was sitting erectly by an opposite wall. Sumatra was present, too; a fact to which her elder sister repeatedly called attention by urging the necessity of Sumatra's changing for the ball. Sumatra, Epes had learned, had been half permitted and half coerced into going.

"I can get ready in twelve minutes," she announced.

"I don't doubt that," Annice retorted; "but what will you look like when it is done? In the first place your hair is like wire and takes the longest while to be really possible——"

"It won't matter," said Sumatra; "Epes told me I couldn't make myself attractive, no matter how much we all tried."

"Did you say that, Epes?" Annice asked. "It was rather tactless of you, because, though you'd never guess it, Sumatra is crazy about you. It might even be more than I am."

Epes Calef gazed at Sumatra with a brutal indifference. She met his eyes courageously, and in an even voice replied to her sister.

"I was once," she corrected the other, "when I thought that Epes belonged to the sea. But now he's on land——" She made a gesture of dismissal. "Epes, while I suspect he's very good, is my great disappointment. I don't like good people."

"What experience have you had with bad?" he asked cuttingly. "As usual, you are just talking words. You are a regular sea lawyer."

"Do get dressed, Sumatra," Annice said.

"Something light and feminine," Epes added; "with wreaths of flowers for you to put your feet through."

He couldn't understand why, whenever he talked to Sumatra, he became so vindictive. He had no particular desire to be nasty; it came up in spite of him.

"Perhaps no one will ask me to dance."

"If they do," he advised her, "and it is near supper, don't let go or you'll get no oysters."

"Sumatra, get dressed," Annice commanded.

"Maybe I won't at all."

"Do you mean you'll go like you are?"

"It wouldn't kill anyone, would it? I shouldn't come home and cry if I didn't get an armful of favors; I can get along, for a few minutes anyhow, by myself."

This, Epes thought, promised to be amusing. Peppery Sumatra! Annice glanced at him hastily.

"Please, Sumatra," she entreated; "we simply can't be late. I'll give you my white-ribbed Spanish stockings."

The other serenely answered, "The feet would be too big."

He had never noticed her feet, and to his considerable surprise they were smaller, narrower than Annice's.

"You are a lumpish, impossible child," the elder said acrimoniously. "Why I begged mother to let you start the cotillions I can't imagine. And when we get there you are not to hang about me."

"I won't; you're not seaworthy. You are cut away too much through the middle; you would go over in a good blow."

Epes incautiously laughed.

"Be still," Annice directed him; "she must not be encouraged in such conduct."

"Well," he said pacifically, "you wouldn't, Trinidad." He often substituted the West India island for that from which she was named, reminding her of his matrimonial prediction.

"Yes, sampan," Annice echoed him. "Will you or will you not get dressed?"

"I will, when I have twelve minutes. It doesn't, you know, take me three hours." Nevertheless, she rose. "You haven't been specially nice to me, have you?" she said slowly, carefully avoiding Epes Calef. "You made pretty clear all you thought. I don't believe I could be like that."

Suddenly she gazed full at Epes. "It might be your father in you," she concluded; "if I were you I shouldn't encourage that—for Annice's sake. It would be so hard on her."

"Thank you, but I can take care of myself," Annice assured her brightly; "and it would be nicer to omit the personal history."

"All I say is wrong!" Sumatra declared.

"All," Epes echoed her.

"I must be a sampan."

"Must."

"Square bowed, and only fit for rivers."

"For rivers."

"But even that is better than a desk," she reminded him. She was beside the door, and paused with a hand upon the frame, looking over her shoulder. "What Annice told you was true," she reiterated. "I had a little picture hidden in a drawer, which I am now going up to tear into bits."

When she had gone Annice turned to him in a conciliatory manner.

"There is something I meant to tell you at once, this afternoon, but it slipped from my mind. I hope you won't be angry and I can't imagine how it happened. But the whole thing, of course, is exaggerated; it must be all nonsense at bottom. Still I am sorrier than words can say. Epes, somehow I've lost the token."

He gazed, startled at her, with a stirring of the old Calef superstition within him. However, he concealed it.

"That is too bad. We think it's rather valuable, you know. Perhaps it will turn up; there are so many places you might have left it."

No, she replied; she knew how they felt about it, and she had left it, she was certain, in the lacquer box on her dressing-case. It was very mysterious and uncertain.

"Now," she said with a smile, "you won't have to marry me. The spell, the charm is broken."

This he repudiated in a form correct and stiff. The influence that absurd East Indian coin exerted upon his thoughts was amazing. He repeated, silently, her words—"Now you won't have to marry me." But certainly they had no force, no reality. He was bound to her not by an obang, but by honor. At the same time his feeling was undeniably different; he regarded her from a more detached position. What was that Sumatra had hinted—about crying over a scarcity of favors, and taking three hours to dress? It didn't matter to him, nothing did; it

only added to the general weariness, waste of existence. Epes recalled the promised French boudoir in the threatened Boston house. That was it—his life hereafter was to be passed in a little scented room choked with brocade and hangings.

A maid appeared, enveloped Annice in a long cloak luxuriously lined with sables, twisted a silvery veiling over her netted hair, over her lovely regular features, her face with its indefinite suggestion of golden oranges.

"I thought Sumatra would be late," she declared in an abstracted exasperation. Then through the veiling she gave him a metallic and masked kiss. From the hail her voice sounded, fretful about her carriage boots.

The carriage with Annice and Sumatra departed; he must go, too; where, he didn't know, it no longer mattered; home, he supposed. There was a second stamping of hoofs before the Balavan dwelling, and Mrs. Balavan, in street wraps, passed the drawing-room door. Epes remembered that he had heard his mother speak of going to a ballad soir  e with her. Still he remained seated, after the hour of dinner, and it was nearly nine before he left.

The light in his father's office was, as usual, turned up, a thin haze of tobacco smoke perceptible. Without the desire to go up to his room Epes sat in a lower chamber. Snatches of the conversation—the quarrel, really—between Sumatra and Annice returned to him. How essentially different they were. Annice was far, far the lovelier. She made a business of being beautiful. But at least that, in a wife, was something; the majority of wives had far less. What a curious double life it would be—two separate people with one name, in one house. She could never, he was sure, mean more to him than she did now. And it was clear that for her part her demand was no greater.

Sumatra would be the opposite—there was no end to what she expected, fought for, insisted upon. Strangely enough, he couldn't see her as a wife—even for that coast-wise figure he had so often pictured—at all. He was unable to discover what sort of man would suit her, but certainly one armed with a belaying pin. He became conscious of a clamor faintly heard from another part of

Salem; it grew more distinct, and he recognized that it was the confused alarms and uproar of a fire. The fire evidently lay in the direction of Marlboro Street; the noise increased rather than subsided; but even this didn't stir him until his father appeared.

"I shall have to neglect my duty this evening," he explained; "there are some questions of foreign exchange. But perhaps you will take my place."

Epes went silently out to the hall, where two leather buckets, painted with the name Active Fire Club, were hanging. He secured them, and a wool scarf, and went unexcitedly in search of the fire. It was, as he had thought, in the vicinity of Marlboro Street, the Baptist Church. The Fire Engine Exchange, he saw, to which generally the men of the Calef family belonged, had secured the place of honor, directly at the conflagration. Its reservoir was connected by hose to another engine, and that latter to a third, which drew from the source of their water. A pandemonium rose about Epes—the hoarse, jeering shouts of the competing companies, authoritative voices magnified by trumpets, the clatter of the hand pump, and the dull roar of the unconquerable flames. A curtain of black smoke, ruddy at its base and, above, poured with live cinders, rolled up across the immaculate green sky and frosty stars.

The members of the Active Fire Club had formed their line for the rapid orderly passing of buckets, and Epes had taken his place at the end, when he saw a short, familiar feminine shape standing alone. It was Sumatra, and it was extremely wrong of her to be there, like that, so late.

He left his position hurriedly and laid a hand on her arm. How, he demanded, had she got there, and why was she by herself?

"Oh, Epes!" she exclaimed with pleasure. "The cotillon nearly killed me, it was so stupid; and then I heard the alarms, and James Saltonstall wanted to come; and so, you see, here we—here I am."

"Where is he? Why did he leave you?"

Before she could answer there was a louder opposed shouting of voices:

"Suck him dry, Exchange!"

"Overwash them, Adams. Drown the damned silk stockings!"

Sumatra clutched his hand excitedly. "Don't you see—they are trying to burst the Exchange engine; we haven't enough men to pump, because some didn't leave Hamilton Hall, and James is at the sweep. You must go, too, Epes. Quick, quick, or it will be too late!"

His negative attitude settled into an active perversity; Epes Calef made up his mind that he wouldn't pump; they could knock the silly engines into painted fragments for all him. Sumatra gave him a strong impatient shove forward, but he resisted her.

"The fire will be over in a few more minutes," he observed.

She damned the fire excitedly; it was the engine she cared about. "I'll pump, myself!" Sumatra cried.

He turned to her with a smile, but that was immediately lost as he saw that she had every intention of fulfilling her threat. Sumatra had started toward the profane companies of men when he caught her by the shoulder.

He said coldly, "You're crazy. Nobody ever heard of such a thing—a girl pumping at a fire! You'd be talked about, insulted in songs all over the country. Come home at once."

She wrenched herself from his hold, and Epes was obliged to stand in front of her with his arms outspread. Sumatra's face grew crimson with rage.

"Get out of my way!" she commanded him. "Do you think everyone is a coward and a ninny like you? I'll pump if I want to, and it doesn't matter who sings about it. I don't care what the other fools of women do."

"No, you won't," he told her grimly.

She gave him a shove, and she was so strong that, unprepared, he staggered. She nearly succeeded in evading him, but he caught her with an arm around her vigorous waist. In an instant they were fighting. Braced, with her hand crushing into his face, she tried to break his hold; then Sumatra struck him in the eye. Infuriated, he wanted to knock her head off, but he had to restrain himself to a negative attack.

"I'll throw you down and sit on you," he gasped; "here, on the street."

By way of reply she kicked his shins until, through the hurt, he could feel the blood sliding into his shoes. Shouts, which now, in his rage, he heard but dimly, derisive and encouraging calls, surrounded him. The girl, the little Amazon, was implored to crack his coco; there were protesting cries of shame, but these were lost in the larger approval and entertainment. By Jupiter, but she was finishing him! This, Epes desperately told himself, was horrible beyond words.

"Stop it!" he said savagely, again and again.

But through set teeth Sumatra replied that she'd pump if she chose, and no—no l-l-land shark could stop her. At this there was a hurrah. Her strength was amazing, and entirely wrong; she was like a maniac. Then with a free arm he punched her directly and rudely in the stomach. Sumatra settled against him limply; and holding her up, dragging her with him past threatening faces wavering in the dark, he succeeded in getting her around a corner to a deserted street.

She was still limp, struggling for breath; her face was pale and her hair in torn disorder. Sumatra slowly recovered, and—amazingly—she smiled. Epes' anger, too, fled; he gazed at her, examining in dismay her clothes with a feeling which might almost have been called admiration. Yet he spoke severely.

"You ought to be in a cage," he told her; "you're just wild."

However was she to fix her clothes, she replied; where could she go? "I ought to go back to Hamilton Hall."

To this he agreed, the Balavan house was far, inconveniently situated; and they decided, since the Calefs and Balavans were now practically one family, to stop at his dwelling for the repairing of her clothes and spirit. He secured his buckets and they hurried back, through a serene air like liquid ice, over Summer Street to Chestnut. The light was still burning in Ira Calef's office, and noiselessly they turned into an opposite room.

Epes went on into the dining room, opening darkly beyond, leaving Sumatra with candles on the floor before a tall mirror. There, bearing a high silver candlestick and a following indeterminate illumination, he discovered a bottle of champagne, tagged the ship *Nautilus* and the year, and gathered two high glasses and some ice. He was tingling with excitement, a disturbance deeper than physical. He felt oddly detached from his late life, the commonplace and irresponsible; his mind was without images, thought—it was like a whirling of crackling colored lights. He found his situation—the uncorked champagne, the two glasses, the unsuspecting near presence of his father, Sumatra, rearranged, entering the dining room—extraordinary and invigorating. The wine foamed whitely through the ice, turning into a silky clear amber that stung his lips. Sumatra observed, sitting down, that she ought to go on to the cotillon at once.

“What,” she demanded, “will James Saltonstall think?”

That, Epes replied, was of singularly small importance.

The rose flush had returned to her cheeks, her eyes were shining; she was decidedly more attractive than he had admitted. But that, he made up his mind, he’d never tell her. She sipped and sipped from her glass; that in itself was unusual, startling. No, he corrected his impression, it would have been in any other girl of Sumatra’s age, but not in her. The most unexpected, inappropriate things seemed to become her perfectly.

“I don’t want to go,” she added, so long after her other phrase that he almost lost the connection. “We are so different,” Sumatra pointed out; “I hardly ever do what I don’t want to. It’s a good thing for your father I’m not you.”

“It wouldn’t make any difference,” he said, listlessness again falling over him; “in the end it would be the same; you’d stay or go as he said.”

“I would not.”

“Oh, yes, but you would.”

“He couldn’t make me,” she insisted; “not about that. It’s too terribly important.”

Epes became annoyed. “Can’t you understand that, to

my father, nothing is important except what he wants?"

"Why argue?" she decided. "After all, I am not you. And yet, even as it is, I believe if I were concerned, which I'm not, I could do what I decided with him."

He laughed. "Try, and if you are successful, why—why, I'd marry you instead of Annice."

The flush deepened painfully in her countenance; she regarded him with startled eyes. For a moment there was a ridiculously tense silence; and then, relaxing, she shook her head negatively.

"It wouldn't be any good; you'd have no regard for me."

"Regard for you!" he exclaimed. "If you did that I'd think more of you than anything else on earth; more than I did of—of the *Triton*." His voice, his manner darkened. "But you mustn't; there's a lot you don't understand—my father, first of all. He can be very nasty."

"I've told you before, he's only a man," she reminded him. "I shouldn't be afraid." Her direct gaze again challenged him, but Epes shook his head dejectedly. Suddenly she laid a hand over his. "I didn't tear that picture up," she whispered. Then with a sweep of her arm she finished what had been in her glass, and rose. "Come on, he's still in the office."

Epes Calef urged her in careful tones not to be a donkey; he tried, here discreetly, to restrain her; but she went resolutely on, through the front room into the hall. There would be a frightful row, but he couldn't desert Sumatra. However, in the passage she paused, with her lips against his ear.

"Remember, better than the *Triton*, or it would kill me."

Ira Calef looked up from his table, frowning slightly as she entered the office, followed by Epes. The elder's face was as white as marble under the artificial light.

"Why, Sumatra," he greeted her easily.

Epes tried to step between her and his father—disaster—but she held him back, speaking immediately in a voice as level as, but a little faster than, Ira Calef's.

"I suppose you think it's strange to see me here, so late, with Epes; but it is stranger even than you imagine." She

put a hand over Epes Calef's mouth. "No," she protested, "you promised to let me speak. Mr. Calef," said the incredible Sumatra, "perhaps I ought to apologize to Mrs. Calef and you—Epes and I are married."

Epes' amazement, which he barely restrained, was no greater than his father's, but the latter's was given, for him, full expression.

"Married!" he repeated in a voice slightly and significantly louder than usual. "Why, that is outrageous! Nothing, nothing at all was said to me. My plan was wholly different."

He rose, beyond the table, with one hand resting beside a paper weight of greenish glass. Epes' eyes fastened upon this.

"It was, as you might guess, in a hurry," Sumatra went on; "we decided only today. You must remember that I am as much a Balavan as Annice, and I suit Epes far better; I understand and agree with his ambition."

The man's manner was colder than the night.

"What ambition?" he demanded.

"To go to sea, of course."

"Epes isn't going to sea," he instructed her.

"He wasn't, as your son," she corrected him; "but married to me, yes."

"No," Ira Calef answered in a restrained, bitter temper that yet had the effect of a shout.

"But he is," Sumatra Balavan retorted. "He is, and now you can't stop him. It doesn't matter what you want, I won't have a husband fastened like a sponge to the earth, and as soft as a sponge." Her anger, equal with Ira Calef's, rose.

The room grew quiet. Epes' attention was still concentrated on the heavy rectangle of glass close by his father's hand. With a sensation like an enveloping breath of winter air he saw the other's fingers reach out and close about the paper weight. He hadn't a second to spare; but Sumatra, too, had seen the instinctive movement on the table.

"I wish you would," she told the man facing her with a set, icy glare. "I'd have you dropped off the end of Derby

Wharf. I'm not your wife or son; there would be no reason for my protecting you, hiding your beastliness from the world. Nothing could be better than having you throw a paper weight at me."

The shadows under Ira Calef's eyes, on the deathly pallor of his face, were like black smudges; a shiver passed over his rigidity. His hand drooped; both hands held the edge of the table before him. Epes, in a swift insight brushed with compassion, saw what was in his father's mind—the huddled light figure crushing the geranium border.

"Get out of here," the elder said to Sumatra in strained, dry tones. "Go, and take him with you."

"To sea?" she insisted.

"If there is any salt water in hell."

But, once more in the hall, she was pitiably shaken.

"What can we do?" she implored Epes, against him.

He reassured her that that was easy enough; a far different, apparently trivial and ill-timed question occupied him.

"Sumatra," he proceeded, "tonight Annice told me that she had lost the obang, the Calef token. Did you find it?"

"No, Epes," she replied, "I didn't find it." Her voice sank, died. "I didn't find it, Epes," she repeated with difficulty. "I couldn't, very well, could I, when I had stolen it?"